

Diabetes

Diabetes now affects nearly 21 million Americans – or 7 percent of the U.S. population – and more than 6 million of those people do not know they have diabetes, according to the latest prevalence data released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This number represents an additional 2.6 million people with diabetes since 2002. Another 41 million people are estimated to have pre-diabetes, a condition that increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes – the most common form of the disease – as well as heart disease and stroke.

Diabetes is a serious disease that affects how the body uses food. The body changes the food you eat into sugar, also known as "glucose". Your blood carries that glucose to the cells of the body. A hormone called "insulin" helps move that glucose from the blood into the cells where it can be used for energy. If that glucose builds up in the blood instead of going into the body's cells, it is known as high blood sugar or "diabetes". Over time these high levels of glucose in the blood can cause complications, including damage to our eyes, heart, blood vessels and nerves. If you have diabetes the most important thing is to know how to take care of ourselves and protect our bodies from the following diabetes-related complications:

- **Arteriosclerosis** or "hardening of the arteries" and heart disease.
- **Kidney failure** caused by damage to the small blood vessels in your kidneys.
- **Blindness** caused by damage to the small blood vessels in your eyes
- **Leg and foot amputations** due to poor circulation, nerve damage and infections of the feet, which often begins with numbness and tingling.

Symptoms of diabetes include:

Frequent urination and excessive thirst

Extreme hunger

Fatigue

Dry skin

Slow-healing sores

Blurred vision

Unexplained weight loss (particularly in children).

If you think you have been experiencing any of these symptoms, contact your doctor immediately.

A blood test taken after a **6 - 8 hour fasting period** is used to determine whether or not a person has diabetes. **If such a blood test yields a blood glucose level of 126 mg/dl or greater that person has diabetes.** Symptoms for Type II Diabetes develop gradually and are not as noticeable as those of Type I.

WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS TYPES OF DIABETES?

Pre-diabetes can exist up to seven years before it is actually diagnosed using a fasting blood sugar test. Pre-diabetes is defined as a blood sugar measure greater than 100 mg/dl but less than 125 mg/dl.

Type 1 affects about 10 percent of diabetics. Type 1 (insulin dependent), is usually diagnosed during childhood or adolescence. This means that the body produces very little or no insulin at all.

Type 2 (non-insulin dependent) diabetes is often diagnosed at mid-life. Those with Type 2 are able to produce insulin, but not enough to meet the body's energy needs. Being overweight, physically inactive, having high blood pressure and a family history of diabetes are all risk factors for diabetes. A related issue is the growing number of adults who are also developing the disease at younger ages.

Gestational diabetes develops during pregnancy and usually disappears after delivery. However, women who have had gestational diabetes have a 50 percent greater of developing diabetes later in life.

Mature Onset of Diabetes in Youth or "MODY" is a new diagnosis resulting from the rise in the number of children and youth diagnosed with diabetes before and during puberty. These individuals will have more time to accumulate vascular and nerve damage than those who develop diabetes late in life. Thus, children and young adults with diabetes are more likely to suffer severe and costly complications as they age. The increase in diabetes among this age group, especially Type 2, parallels the increase of overweight, obesity and the sedentary lifestyle of these youngsters.

Over the long term, high blood sugar, common with uncontrolled diabetes, damages the lining of blood vessels and the nerves. People with diabetes tend to have a shorter life span and are at risk for kidney disease, blindness and nerve damage.

The good news is that diabetes can be managed through proper education and monitoring.

For more information visit the [American Diabetes Association](#).

For workshops check the Training Calendar.